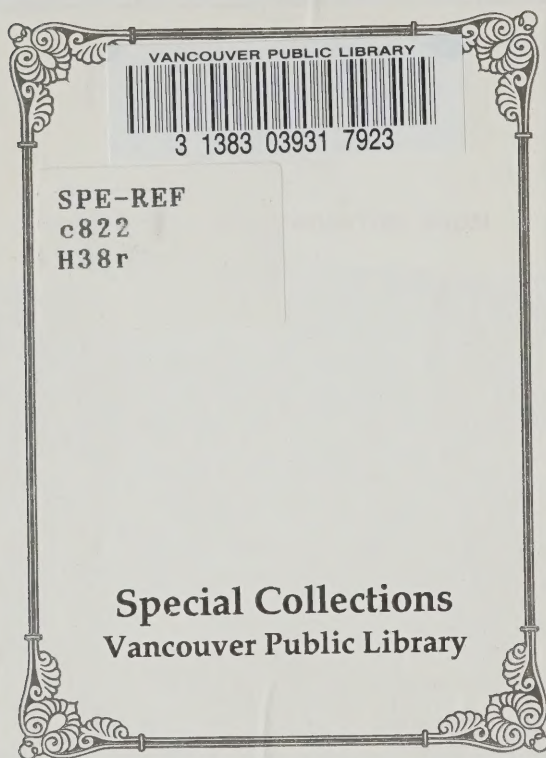


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'THE ROSE OF PERSIA'

A
DRAMATIC
PIECE
IN
THREE
ACTS

by
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VANCOUVER

B.C.

1917.

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FOREWORD

The Doms are the hereditary bards and minstrels of the Baloches, to which race the Rinds also belong.

The story of Bivaragh's elopement with the Shah's daughter, Granaz, forms the subject of a well-known Balochi folk-song; some of the circumstances of which have suggested the following scenes.

One peculiarity may be noted: that custom which made it undignified for a Balochi-poet to sing his own songs. Hence the hereditary character of the minstrelsy among the Dom race.

THE PERSONS

BIVARAGH, a Rind poet.

LORI, a Dom minstrel.

HANI, foster-mother of
Granaz, and once
therefore an int
mate of the shubi-
stan(harem)of the
Shah

SELIM, a boy employed
by Hani

GRANAZ, daughter of
the Shah

A SCOUT, GUARDS, and POPULACE of Kandahar; A MARE, A CUR.

Time 16th Cent. circa.

Y

ACT I

Scene. - In the defiles of the mountains above Kandahar.

Scene
one

(Lori is discovered resting after toiling along on foot. The defiles are echoing with the tuneful shouts of one singing for joy. Lori seems to be taking professional interest in the song.)

LORI

That is a Rind ; but, of all Rinds,
What tiger of his tribe turned minstrel ?

(Bivaragh comes riding into sight. He dismounts with a shout of recognition.)

BIVARAGH.

Ha !

By the bolt of song God forged to blast these hills.-
Sweet-singing Lori !

LORI

Bivaragh, son of Bahar !

BIVARAGH

Which way to fortune, Lori ?

LORI

Kandahar.

BIVARAGH

I seek no better, then,

LORI

And I no worse.

Art thou alone ?

BIVARAGH

A song's good company.

I have been singing, Lori ; I came through
The passes singing, and - I have a song,
A song for a king's daughter.

LORI

So they say †
For song is loud-voiced company, and telltale.

BIVARAGH.

True ; for the mountain-peris of these chasms
Have had it word for word.

LORI

And so have I ;
But call them echoes.

BIVARAGH

God is everywhere ! . . .
(Bivaragh unbridles the mare
and drives her off to wander;
then comes forward)

Plague of th' hereditary race of Doms !
I know their brigand-business, how it calls
For all such chains of song, - like necklaces
Snatched in the hills, or pilfered in the tents,
To trade them in the gutters of bazars.

LORI

I turn them into something that will sing.

BIVARAGH

Inshallah ! I have the measure of thy march
In spans and farsangs . . .

(He looks down into the valley,
sunlit and richly cultivated,
bounded in the distance by a
chain of mountains.)

(magniloquently) Ha! ^{the} glorious light

Smiting the hills, flooding the valley! Beating
Heart of the world, how fair thou art ! . . . Listen!

(He swings face-about to Lori,
who is making preparations for
the hillman's meat)

(seizing him by the arm) Listen! ~~old songs~~ !

Last night the lightning which went staggering through
The caverns of the sky, like a man drunk,
And afterwards fell down, cast from the clouds, -
Shining like crystal forts ablaze with feast,
Alive with dance, and with carousals ringing
Like thunder from the clash of brazen cups
Met in the centre of some high Assembly; -
Lightning last night brought tidings of my love
Which clothed my body as it were with flowers.
There was fine gilding in the mosque of heaven,
And for a sign of faith fantastical,
A rainbow sprang in the south, and near it loomed
A purple storm-cloud, swaying and billowy,
The image of my love,

LORI

'Swaying' again !

BIVARAGH

But billowy as my love, -

LORI

Or anyone's.

This is the spring-distemper, an affection
Calling for purge ! And wilt thou keep the song?

BIVARAGH

I keep the song ? 'Tis nothing that will keep.

LORI

These hills are not so common that the song
Would sound the worse told in the lady's ear.
There's profit in the venture, more for thee
Than me, Bivaragh ; but something for us both.

BIVARAGH

It sings itself, Lori ; it sings itself.

LORI

Then it's a most incorrigible flux !

BIVARAGH

Granaz, - the lovely Granaz !

LORI (ceasing operations)

The Princess Granaz?

BIVARAGH

That flame of men and perfume among women,
The daughter of the Shah!

LORI

Allah forbend !

Some humbler sweet were more get-at-able,
More quickly had, and - paid for.

BIVARAGH

And forgotten,

Lori.

LORI

They are all mad, these poets ; thou,
The maddest.

BIVARAGH

God forbid to common men
Such fine affliction !

(Two scouts, also singing of
Granaz, ride briskly between them.
They spring aside to avoid being
run over, which causes the scouts
much merriment)

LORI

There go more, by two,
Likewise afflicted. All the countryside
Turns nightingale about the 'Rose of Persia' ;
But who -

BIVARAGH (professionally)

That picture's mine - 'the Rose of Persia'.

LORI.

Then it enjoys some famous company;
More famous even than the Princess Granaz,
Who's popular. Her escapades have caught
The fancy of a mob of poets, who know
No more than all the songs I sing of her ;
And - thanks to Spring, the Singer - thine's the tenth.
I have nine songs as long, and five no better,
Three worse - or hardly, and not one that's good.
In all of them she stands without a rival ;
In all the mirror of perfections forty ;
In all she's dagger-nosed and soft as wax;
Her body's silver, and she lifts her steps
Sideways and, though I never saw it, sways

Along on butterflies' or camels'-legs ;
 Her brows are arched as usual, and her mouth
 The usual flower ; her hair is anyone's,
 Perfumed and curly with prolonged attention ;
 Her voice is sugared, and she claps her hands ;
 She's slender as a poplar, and compared,
 With her the cypress is a crooked hag ;
 She wears a silver circlet for her neck,
 A bangle, and a nose-ring, and cloth sandals...

BIVARAGH

Is this the picture of the 'Rose of Persia'?-
 The picture of a dusty girl among
 The water-pots, sewing her brother's trousers !

LORI (resuming occupation)

Hast thou some news that's later than the last?
 Hath she a mole that is not black as musk?
 Or apple-chin not dimpled with a well ?

BIVARAGH

She is the scent that hangs about a garden
 At sundown, when the trees are still as thought ;
 She is the moon upon the fourteenth day,
 The one sufficient ornament of night;
 She is the arm of dawn that lifts the veils
 Above the hot-faced mountains, and behold!
 The precipices of her breast are hung
 With grapes, and in the valleys pomegranates.
 The blue day passes into red ; again
 The stars are in the trees, and the great shades
 Gather above her brows-like scimitars
 Which cut through armour ; while her sandals move
 Like torches glittering in a dangerous place.

LORI

Then she's a paragon that's never seen.

BIVARAGH

I have gathered a ruby. . .
I have uttered a speech . . .
I have pierced a pearl !

LORI

Thou hast been quick as thought !

BIVARAGH

Listen ! . . . To-day

One of those artful witcheries of the dawn
Was building on a reddening mountain-top
The likeness of a heart-enchancing woman,
Whose lashes were a lover's paradise -

LORI

This is a breathless, trackless waste of words
That leads to nowhere - nowhere in creation,
Bivaragh, and least of all to Kandahar . . .
Possession ! - there's the perfect thing ! -

BIVARAGH

Possession ?

LORI

If not by asking, better - by assault.

BIVARAGH

Who dreams of such possession, such perfection !

LORI

The wisest fools of all.

BIVARAGH

What fools are wise ?

LONI

Fools teach the world, and dreamers lead the way.
 There's no man wiser than the fool in love
 When he's a dreamer and the year's in Spring -
 Both wise and foolish; wise enough to dream,
 And fool enough - when he is fool enough -
 To starve. - Witness thyself. Only last night,
 It seems, there was a golden-fronted babe,
 Tethered in safety, struggling like a Turk, -
 A hungry babe - a sage - a fool - a dreamer
 Fettered by fancy and . . . in fine, a poet
 So galled upon the instant of a thought,
 Red with the whole importance of the blood,
 He pulled the peg of song up, and was off ! . . .
 Off where ? . . . That's in the wind, if not possession?

BIVARAGH.

A white narcissus that would wound the heart!

LONI

More things than white narcissus wound the heart.
 Thou'lt have no good of this. Here is no food
 For starving stallions, - till thy lovely lady
 Bring thee cold water on her head, a relish
 Of fat sheeps'-tails, an ample dish of lentils,
 And good broad grain withal in a red nose-bag.
 These things are fodder, dainty satisfactions
 Alike for mares and men. But song-stuff - pouf !
 Not till thou lay thy nuzzle in her lap
 Will there be peace.

BIVARAGH

And golden peace were that !

LORI

Golden ? It should be golden ; but till then

Silver will serve.

BIVARAGH

There speaks an old acquaintance.

(Another horseman is heard
galloping up the pass)

LORI

And here's another one.

Scene
Two

(A mounted scout of the Shah's
body-guard rides in.)

SCOUT

Who are you, - Rinds ?

BIVARAGH

Who calls me ?

SCOUT

My authority. The Shah,

Armed for the least disturbance or surprise,

Passes below with every mark of strength.

Knowing the independence of these hills,

He seeks no hindrance ; and he sends you peace

For speed.

BIVARAGH

Where is he bound?

SCOUT

For Samarkand.

BIVARAGH

How many go with him ?

SCOUT

I am not here
 To answer, nor to blind your eyes ; ^b But look
 Abroad and make your count.

(Bivaragh and Lori estimate
 the Shah's forces passing in
 the valley below.)

BIVARAGH LORI

Full forty score.

SCOUT

And more to come.

BIVARAGH.

Baggage, and women.

SCOUT

None

But dancing-girls to meet the Khan of Kara.
 The father of his people moves abroad
 For marriage -

BIVARAGH

Who's to wed ?

SCOUT

The Princess Granaz,
 As wilful as a filly frisking along -
 The hill-skirts of Kelat is hard to hold,
 And harder still to please; some say, too good
 A bargain for the Khan, who likes them wild . . .

BIVARAGH

Is she as wild and lovely as they say ?

SCOUT

Veiled or unveiled and freely as she will,
She's on the walls or over just as often
By all report, which makes the most of tales.
No truth in half of them. And there's a style
Of search come in that's galling the bazaars
Believed to shelter her when she's abroad . . .
L O R I *S C O U T*
They're signalling . . . Whose mare goes yonder?

BIVARAGH

Miss.

SCOUT.

How many have you here besides yourselves?

BIVARAGH

No twain of us more lonely ; signal that.

SCOTT

Allah ! and I'll not search . . .

(He signals to the Shah's
cavalcade.)

The expedition

Looks for no useless brawling in the hills.
Report this widely, and have your people here
Gathered within the month, and you'll not starve.
(The scout rides off)

BIVARAGH (reflectively)

Scene Three

The Princess Granaz weds the Khan of Kara!
The Princess Granaz weds . . .

LORI

The Khan of Kara, -

What of it?

BIVARAGH

What a death for song to die !

LORI (preparing a chew)

Well, that's the daily doing of the world,
And marriage to the life ! For when the bride
Lies in the marriage-bed, what's left to sing for ?
One thing is certain, when the Princess weds,
There'll be an end of all these rhapsodies.

The Rose will die ;
The Nightingale will fly ;
And all the race of bards will heave a sigh !

We'll hear no more of her ; once hidden away,
She'll cut no country-capers with the Khan.
Then all the story of her pretty pranks
Will fade into a far forgetfulness,
And there'll be other tales to hawk along . . .
Allah be praised for other songs to sing !

(Lori offers chew to Bivaragh,
who ignores the courtesy, and,
with a shoulder-shrug, Lori puts
it in his own cheek.)

BIVARAGH.

Lori, at last I know what thing is real.
The lovely Granaz that I seem to see
Inhabiting this moving universe,
Clad, like the pleasant and abounding mountains,
In light and life ; swinging among the clouds
Tasselling heaven ; or blown along the stars
That fringe the brilliant selva of all days ; -
This lofty revelation is removed
Too far for honest joy. I have a mind,

Lori, to take thee at thy wisdom now, -
Thy wisdom at my price. That which is mine -
 Mine for the lack of asking or assault -
 Is any man's; and any man's is mine
 In such a case, if I will pay for antics.
 Go, sing my song to Granoz ! If I come
 Never to see her, never to know of woman
 More than the blind avowal of a song,
 Only to call it mean, and all men fools
 Who ever sang of love for singing's sake ; -
 Ay, if I come, after all singing, never
 To know myself, I'll never sing again.
 Possession is the perfect thing, - well said !
 I need that perfect thing to make me man.
 Am I a lute and fingers fumbling out
 A vagrant entertainment thrummed upon
 A husk of battling echoes ? Am I even
 A song that knows no better than it sings ?
 Neither ! All song's my servant ; instrument
 And song both servants in a lovely cause ;
 But shall I make them mistresses ? Not I !
 I am the greatest lover, and I sing
 Not song in love with song, but song in love !

LORI (hedging)

Well, I could make it something at a price ;
 But these old bones, and that hot blood of thine . . .

BIVARAGH (Paying out coin)

Here's the cement for both.

LORI

How shall I come
To singing-quarters with so high a lady ?

BIVARAGH

Where is the Shah ? Will not the jewelled birds
Be fretting songless in their golden cages
Bager for fun ? We'll speak of that anon.
Leave that for now. Once come into the city
Look for the old crone, Hani, who would sell
Her soul for silver, - if it's worth as much.
She'll find some messenger ✓

LORI

Son of Bahar,
This game is past the antics of my years.
From my youth up I never dreamed of wealth;
Now that I live in age I have the least
Necessity of wealth at such a price.
The smallest coin is gold enough for me ;
The largest could not pay me for my life.

BIVARAGH.

Still, there's no more for thee, alive or dead, -
I've done with thee. I'll find a Dom with thows,
Buttocks and brains to play the part I pay for.
Have at thee for a finger-sucking rascal,
Son of a Jew and a flat-breasted mother -
Who was she ? I'll take all back . . .

(Bivaragh seizes Lori's hands to recover the money he has given him for his services as the singer of his song to Granaz, and Lori suddenly finds himself satisfied with the amount, and succumbs.)

LORI

I'll sing! I'll sing!

(Curtain)

ACT II

Scene. / Interior of a booth in the bazars of Kandahar. Merchandise is spread toward the street at back, where all manner of folk are passing and chaffering. In front to one side is a screened partition for the privacy of womenfolk.

Scene
One

(Hani is seen seated forward, with thoughts far away from the traffic in which Selim is engaged with shoppers. Lori is lingering conspicuously at the shopfront).

SELIM (to Hani)

There is that Dom !

HANI

Again ? Then drive him hence ;

For that's the sign I want - the sign for Bivaragh.

(She holds out her hand in a splash of sunlight, palm-up with middle-finger erect - an improvised sundial)

Hardly four hours from sun-up . . . He'll be here

Before that wench I sent for in such haste .-

Selim !

SELIM (Waving Lori away)

Go - go ! she's calling me.

(Lori moves off)

HANI

Selim,

Look for a rider in a cloud of dust ;

Look eastward for all manhood on a mare

Proud of the half-moons on her heels . . .

(Selim goes into the street to do her bidding)

So-ho!

My beam-bright Bivaragh ! horseman, swordsman, Mir,

Prince-patterned Rind of all the Rinds of Sevi,
 What's in the wind that he should be barood ?
 Is't loose-loves or the coloured knuckle-bones ?
 He's not a jackal, and he drinks no bhang ;
 And yet the hardy saint that's in him seeks
 One of the pretty playthings at the Palace,
 A shuffle/shuttle of the shubistan
To take a message ! What should young Rinds do
 With such ear-tickling ? Huh ! strange cloth he weaves !

(to ^ESelim, who now returns)

Nothing in sight ?

SELIM

No Rinds. Up at the Palace

There's crackle of whip/thongs in a great to-do.

HANI

The pretty doves and all ! The eunuchs fare
 Too far afield to please me, and the game
 Grows dangerous ; one sneeze would tell the crows . . .
 Nothing in sight ?

(Selim shakes his head)

— well, he'll not die too young. —

Bivaragh. His story's somewhere in the world.

Scene
 Two

(Enter Granaz in the style of
 a villager)

GRANAZ (in salutat on)

God's mercy, Sesame.

HANI

The shubistan ! —

Which only knows God's mercy for a jest
 No blither than a bowstring round a neck

Choking with passwords into Paradise . . .

Be seated, Fatima. Not one of you

But has a use for me some time o' day;

And now - now, there's a use I have for thee.

Well, I'm the 'Open Sesame' . . . a name

I like, and one to conjure with.

(Granaz reveals herself by
dropping her veil for an instant ;
then bursts into laughter at the
success of her disguise)

. . . Granaz !

I sent for Fatima !

GRANAZ

I came instead.

HANI

Merciful Allah, and a lack of wits

Preserve thee from the consequence.

GRANAZ

All's well ;

Folly is friendly.

HANI

Folly befriend me, then !

GRANAZ (displaying her veils)

When folly earns the bounty of surprise

Folly's no fool. They never wert more safe.

Look ! - one, two, three, and changed at every turn

That none who followed folly saw her twice ;

Or twice the same.

HANI

Or once for ever. / ^ESalim !

GRANAZ

Where shall I sit ?

HANI (to Selim)

Look-to, and serve without.

(Selim proceeds to serve
customers in the street)

GRANAZ

Shall I sit here ?

HANI

But not so openly.

GRANAZ

They'll see the more, and think the less.

HANI

~~Who!~~ *They ~~are~~ who's they?*

GRANAZ (removing face-veil)

Thy, anyone or no one.

HANI

Drop thy veil ?

Then turn thy face for caution's sake. Granaz,

There may be safety here, but not for long ;

Thy coming's done, the going's still to do;

But promise me, and let this be the end

Of such adventure, and the frightfullest

Abuse of all seclusion. Allah !

What if the eunuchs found thee here? For me,

Short shrift ; for thee some torment, and the end

Of trinkets and a hundred heart's delights.

GRANAZ

Why, Hani, many a pretty woman tires
 Of trinkets, and desiring other things,
 Mostly forbidden, slyly slips abroad
 To read a lover's horoscope, to buy
 A pinch of poison or, as often is,
 To play at jobbing jewels with a Jew,
 Damned to convenient usury.

HANI

Granaz !

GRANAZ

If with occasion, and the mind to stray
 Born of a nature good or bad, she strays,
 Where were the harm if then she seeks to trade
 The only thing she cannot give away, -
 Not tricks nor trinkets, but monotony.

HANI

Who taught thee this ?

GRANAZ

None that I know of now :

I seem to have these things -

HANI

At the tongue's tip..

GRANAZ

Here in my heart. The sky falls only once
 To make an infidel.

HANI

Infidel- thou ?

GRANAZ

Custom makes infidel . . . My sky fell down
 When first the eunuchs bade me veil. Murad
 Was Master of the Maidens then ; but now
 That black brute, Ali . . .

HANI

Huh !

GRANAZ

We were to go
 Toward the Helmand for some foreign air,
 So languid were we. / Inured to all the scents
 Of ambergris and musk and ^{burning} woods,
 And snuggling waters too inquisitive
 And curious for my everlasting liking; -
 Even unholy wine, and the oily waft
 Of cheaper perfumes that the eunuchs use,
 I had forgot how sweet a date could smell
 Warm from the branch and cooling in the grass;
 And that the salty trickle that reveals
 The stale intention of a desert-spring
 Was fresher than our fountains, being free.
 These, when denied, recalled a childish joy
 At one time had for nothing, but desired
 With tears when they became the infrequent gift
 Of slaves . . . But that first day : all others veiled
 And went abroad, each stifling in her litter,
 The care of those who cursed and cracked their whips
 To scare a vastly curious countryside . . .

Oh ! if I talk of it - I came for talk . . .
 I wept to see them go. Then I began
 To think - not well, but savagely, until
 Later when I had found correction sharp,
 I thought, and suddenly out of ^{my} heaven
 A fiery stone fell down -

HANI

A fiery stone ?

GRANAZ

A blazing thought !

HANI (bewildered)

A blazing thought ?

GRANAZ

Ay, this :

How many of our lords of Kandahar,
 Seeing a woman once she slipped abroad
 For any cause, could know her who she was,
 His own, his neighbour's, or the Padishah's,
 Thanks to the friendly villainy of the veil ?

HANI

The Holy Messenger ! and art thou come
 To such dissembling by the pains of thought
 Alone ?

GRANAZ

This burns in my Circassian blood !

HANI

And thou art scorched. But if I know the care
I know no cure of custom but disgrace.
Born in the shadow of the highest, Granaz,
No shubistan nor hardly other abode
Shall hold thee as thou art. Look well at me ;
Think what I was to thee, and what I am !

GRANAZ

Nothing but kindness, and a tongue that pricks. -
Enough ! I came for other talk than this, -
But only talk ; so now the news, Hani.

HANI

Had I such desperate need of news ? What news ?

GRANAZ

News of a kind, - of marriage.

HANI

Marriage-news !

GRANAZ

Common enough.

HANI (nodding)

Betrothal's gone a year.

GRANAZ

If to be proved by others, bartered for
On trust, gallantly paid for in advance,
As though I were a camel at a price,
Then I'm betrothed. Also, the Padishah's
To Samarkand.

HANI

And Murad ?

GRANAZ

Gone with him.

Ali, 'the nightingale', - Ali is drunk ;
How else should I be here, since here I am ?

HANI (suspiciously)

And who drugged Ali ?

GRANAZ

Drugged 'the nightingale' ?

The 'Rose of Persia' with a strong perfume
She dropped into his sherbet.

HANI (Mystified)

This and that

And the other, child ! but - why 'nightingale' ?

GRANAZ

Because he snores among the roses.

HANI

Huh !

GRANAZ

Meanwhile the Shah, our father's to Samarkand
With the new Kashmir dancing-girls, to meet
The greatest Khan that ever strode a mare.

HANI (nodding)

The Khan of Kara !

GRANAZ

Spotted elephant !

The fattest, gruffest, and most profligate
Old ruffian out of Tataria - great paunch,
Great feet, great hands, great beard, great everything ;

That's what they say.

(Hani bursts into loud
laughter.)

Mother, be sensible !

HANI

Yet call me Hani. Fool I am to stay ;
Only my hate of Ali, and my love
For thee, a mother's, holds me here to trade.

GRANAZ

Thou art my mother.

HANI

May, I suckled thee.
Thy mother (rest her soul !) died in a carpet
Laughing . . .

GRANAZ (with hands to ears)

Don't ! don't !

HANI

Horse-trampled . . .

GRANAZ (imploringly)

Hani, don't !

HANI (grimly)

And spoilt the carpet.

GRANAZ (fiercely)

I'll hear no more of it !

HANI

Enough's enough to play with, and the Khan
Hath tamed the wits of many a crafty she,
I warrant. Let him only nose in thee
The rough-and-tumble of an escapade
Like this, and he'll have mustard in thy mouth.

GRANAZ

I want to see him - oh ! I want to see him !

HANI

Well, time goes fast enough.

GRANAZ

I'll pull his beard ;

I'll scratch and bite, and -

HANI

Thou'lt be put to starve.

GRANAZ

I know . . . Then I will starve.

HANI

And stripped and whipped -

GRANAZ (rising and stamping foot)

I know / I know! . . . I saw that once.

HANI

Worse yet -

GRANAZ (again stopping ears)

I will not hear, - I know ! But, Hani, all the same
He shall not have me, though I die the death.

HANI

This Ali is a brute who thinks of things
Too fearful to be spoken but by signs;
Remembering all the things which God forgets . . .
After twelve years - remembered my poor Lal !

GHANAZ

Would I could choose my man.!

HANI

I chose my Lal,

And see what came of it, - turned out to die ;

Cast to the desert - starved three days and nights -

Followed a dog to water, and survived,

Thanks be to none but this old carcass - huh !

Wonderful mercy for the shubistan !

GHANAZ

Oh, how I long to join the girls that go

Freely about the country one long day,

And who molests them ? All their fun's their own ;

They toss the ball, they bathe, they sing and dance,

Unveiling is the rule and joy the custom.

Could I not share their revels ? I could be

Thy niece from Herat, cousin from Kabul,

One of thy young folk come from Seistan. -

HANI

As I could be Mount Erbai for the asking !

What's known to one is known to all the crowd.

GHANAZ

But why be known to anyone or all ?

A crowd of faces wears the mask of crowds.

I saw a crowd of faces when they stoned

Thy Lal -

HANI

Who died forgiven !

GRANAZ

Every face
Was murder-stamped for the one thought behind.
So in a troop of us, our sports would make
One face so like another -

HANI

Never thine.

Granaz, thou'art as wild as ever. Lives there man
Can put a bridle on thee ?

GRANAZ

There it is !

That's all a bridal's worth - to bridle one.
One day of freedom's worth a score of bridals ;
I want that first ; then let the other come.

Scene
Three

(Lori is seen again loitering
in the street)

A Dom ! Hani, there is a Dom ! (beckoning) Come here !

HANI (aside)

The child is mad !

GRANAZ (veiling)

Come in, Dom; bring thy songs
And sing us something. See, here is a dirhem !

HANI (aside to Granaz)

Not silver - hide it ! Would'st betray thyself
All in a jump ? For that's the way of it,
Or would be with the girls, given a day
To dance the peasant out and the princess in.

(Hani seizes the coin and
motions the Dom away; but
Granaz waves him to be seated,
and he squats down.)

GRANAZ

My mother's but a rude old woman, Dem.

I hold the purse.

(to Hani who is trying to
dissuade her)

I will!—What song to-day?

(Hani throws up her hands)

Battle or love, sing either . . . Better love ?

Sing love, then, and the bravest song of all.

LORI

No lullabies, nor cradle/songs?

HANI (hunching herself)

None here.

GRANAZ

A song to reach and search beyond the stars.

LOKI

That's something that the world's in travail for,

GRANAZ

~~And hast thou such a song? Are such songs made?~~

LO-I

~~But who's to make them?~~

GRANAZ

Are all poets dead ?

LORI

so-lattering faintly with a dream
I know of one, who lives, and such a song

As might be sung; - someday - to someone else.

GRANAZ (grimacing)

To someone else !

HANI (aside to Granaz)

That comes of showing silver ;

here dirhems are there, may be dinars too.

GRANAZ

And wilt thou sing that song ?

LORI

In part, lady -

Maybe; and pay me after.

GRANAZ

Here is silver.

Now sing thy best. - just a big song of love.

HANI

Everything's big to-day !

GRANAZ

Be silent, Hani

(Lori is droning to his
instrument.)

Hush ! he begins.

HANI

It sounds more like the end.

GRANAZ

Dont bother, Hani ; he's a dear old man.

HANI

Dear at two dirhems !

GRANAZ

Has he got them both ?

(aside to Hani) Now if the Khan were half as dear as he
Though twice as old, I might do ten times worse.

HANI

Marry a Dom? God save all Mussalmans!

GRANAZ (aside)

But look at him !

HANI

They're all as old as sin.

GRANAZ (aloud)

Sing, Dom, and please us ; here's another dirhem.

HANI

Common as flies to-day !

LORI

I'll sing -

GRANAZ

I know !

A truce to love and love-songs. Hast thou been
The country through, and seen no beauties, Dom?
Sing us the greatest beauty !

LORI

That were Granaz

HANI (ASide)

He knows her . . . (aloud to Granaz) Come !

GRANAZ (uneasily

And who is Granaz?

LORI

Granaz?

Whence come you, lady, that you have not heard
Of Granaz, daughter of the Shah, and called
'The Rose of Persia' ?

GRANAZ (earnestly)

Hast thou ever seen

This - Rose ?

HANI (Shrugging her shoulders)

The truth's a pretty bawle here !

LORI

Not I. But there's a fame of her that throbs
 Abroad the country north as Turkestan,
 And east as Sindh; but south as Las Bela
 I heard no rumour of her excellence,
 Lost in the mountains, doubtless... Las Bela !
 'Twas there I held some fishers spellbound while
 They hauled their nets. And when I ceased to sing
 The nets were still to haul. They caught no fish,
 And cursed me roundly for the evil eye.
 Whence come you, Seistan ?

GRANAZ (aside)

'Tis so, Hani :

It could be so !

LORI

I know not of the west,
 But all the Helmand knows her.

GRANAZ (to Lori)

Seistan.

I am a far-come cousin.

HANI (aside)

There again !

Daughter, then cousin . . . If I love my life
 This Dom must go. I shall be flayed alive
 When all gets known.

LORI

Well, if you hold the purse,

I can be deaf ; for if I bore abroad
 All tales I hear I should forget to sing.
 Thus it begins -

GRANAZ

None of those whimpering things,
Dastānaghs, and no distiches !

LORI (glancing at Hani)

None here.

(Lori sings)

I rise at the dawning
With eyes that are heavy
From lonely wondering . . .
Rain, like an awning
Blown from the hills
O'er the plains of Sevi -
Blind water thundering
Wearily,
Drearly
Dawn from the hills . . .

GRANAZ

This is the dullest hearing. What of Granaz ?

LORI (singing again)

A rain-bridge shines in the south ;
A woman comes swaying behind me ;
A pomegranate-flower her mouth,
Her ~~white~~ arms vines to bind me . . .
Oh, brighter than fire and ice !
I love thee, lady ; but God, he
Well knows that I lack the price
Of clothes on thy silver bod-ee . . .

(During the singing the crowd
in the street has become
curious about, but cannot
actually see what is going on.)

GRANAZ (disappointed)

Nothing concerns her less.

LORI

Thus it begins.

HANI (of the crowd)

And there's no end of rubbish, - look at them !

GRANAZ

And where is Sevi ?

LORI

Eastward of these hills.

'Twas thence I met a Rind who bade me learn
A noble song he made for a king's daughter.

GRANAZ

Sing me that song.

LORI (Who has noticed
Bivaragh among the
Crowd)

Lady, I dare not sing
That song, - only to Granaz.

GRANAZ (eagerly)

When will that be ?

LORI

Never; the wall's too high.

GRANAZ

Then sing it here.

(Granaz offers him another coin)

LORI

Nay, lady, tempt me not -- nay, not for gold !

Scene
Four

(There is a disturbance among
the outlanders from among whom
Bivaragh comes forward unceremon-
iously enough. His excited
manner brings many of the crowd
with him.)

BIVARAGH (attacking Lori)

Thou rascal, Lori ! Waste my jewels here ?

SELIM (and others)

Andrunken Rind ! A raider ! Robbery !

(The women rise in confusion at the interruption, and Hani pushes Granaz before her into comparative seclusion which the screened grating affords. Bivaragh stares the women out of sight.)

BIVARAGH (to Lori)

My song to Granaz - here ?

GRANAZ (aside as she goes out to Hani)

To Granaz - me !

BIVARAGH

My song for a king's daughter !

GRANAZ (now in seclusion to Hani)

Me again !

BIVARAGH:

No Dom cheats me ! Come out; come in the open, -
Out of this den, and leave such dice alone.

(Bivaragh hustles out dragging
Lori after him. Hani reenters.)

Scene
Five

HANI

That must be Bivaragh, - (calling) Bivaragh ! Has he
gone ?

Then let him ; he'll be back, and thanks to none.

(to the crowd) Buy in God's name, or go. Am I not known
For honest trading ? Go!

(She is active in helping Selim
to clear the crowd. Then she
whispers to him.)

Follow that Dom,

Selim, watch where he goes, and where he stays
Take note and tell me; lest he fare too far
Before he's silenced.

GRANAZ (behind the rating)

There is gold for news.

(Selim goes out. Granaz first
peeps, then re-enters also.)

Are they all gone ? But what a man of men !

HANI

And get thee gone ! What would'st thou of the boy ?

Begone, and take thy sheaf of tricks along.

Who needs a suckling to embroil her thus,

Or wants a Dom - to pay him ?

(Re-enters Selim, who whispers
to Hani)

GRANAZ (aside)

What a man !

A poet and a very warrior made . . .

His song to Granaz ! I must find that Dom,

And hear that song for this king's daughter, then . . .

(She sees Selim, and drags
him forward by the wrist)

Selim, - thy name is Selim ? Tell that Dom

That I who have some knowledge of the folk

Serving the Palace - cooks and suchlike -

HANI

Selim !

GRANAZ (shaking him)

Tell him, - listen to me -

(she gives him a gold dinar)

See, here is a dinar !

HANI

Now let the heavens fall ! Silver and gold !

GRANAZ

Heed me, not her. How is he called - that Dom ?

SELIM (looking at the money)

Lady !

GRANAZ

Gold, Selim ; keep it. But the Dom -
How is he called ?

SELIM

Sweet-singing Lori, lady.

GRANAZ

Then tell th t Lori, that sweet-singing Lori
That -

HANI

Oh, have mercy on the child !

GRANAZ

Selim !

Attend to me.

(Selim cannot keep his eyes
from the dinar)

Well, look at it again . . .

Now listen, Selim, it is all pure gold,
And so art thou ; but take this message too.
Promise, and say 'By Allah' -

SELIM

Lady !

GRANAZ

Say it !

SELIM

By Allah !

GRANAZ

Good !

SOLIM

What shall I tell him, lady ?

GRANAZ

Tell him -

HANI

Gamble away ! Thy life's thine own.

GRANAZ

Tell him the lady Granaz loves a Dom !

(Selim runs off at once)

HANI (in amazement)

The lady Granaz loves a Dom ? That Dom ?

Scene
Six

(Granaz is convulsed with
amusement)

(There is heard the sound of
distant shouting, and her face
falls. At this moment Bivaragh
returns, and Granaz withdraws
behind the grating, where she
continues to observe the pro-
ceedings.)

BIVARAGH

Where is she, Hani ?

HANI

Hush, and mend thy manners !

I have a reputation.

BIVARAGH (laughing)

None to lose.

The time's long past for that, little old mother.

HANI

Allah's my witness, Bivaragh; this one's chaste.

BIVARAGH (amused)

Where is she, then ?

(A great commotion is heard, this time much nearer, and cries of Ali are distinguishable. Hani runs and looks down the street, and returns much agitated.)

HANI

Ali !

BIVARAGH

And who is Ali ?

HANI

Chief Bunuch now that Murad's hence.

BIVARAGH

What then ?

HANI

This is that very Ali who destroyed
Me and my Lal, - who, after twelve years, found
And stoned him dead. Have I not sworn an oath
To traffic with his charges, damnably
To me and my advantage, but Inshallah !
More damnably to Ali ? . . . Huh !
Breach me the wall, and I could find him out.

GRANAZ (peeping)

Hani !

HANI (pushing her back into hiding)

God and the Prophet ! (to Bivaragh) This is one of them,
The wrong one - for the day is full of faults.

(The shouting becomes nearer
and more violent)

Hear the black dogs - hear them ! They search the booths

By the new rule for all such runabouts.

Bivaragh ! Brave Bivaragh, stand in the way of them ;

Save us ! They will not choose to draw on thee.

BIVARAGH

Thou and thy harlotry are meddling-mad.

HANI

Then what I am, that am I, this or that ;

But she is chaste, I swear it ! Save her, then !

BIVARAGH

And what reward for this ?

HANI

Reward enough ;

I know thee better than to speak of it . . .

This talk is foolish talk; for honour's self

Is not more favoured at the price than thou.

There is the wench I would not ~~hang~~ ^{save} for thee

~~Better~~ ^{Another} than for an hundred others ? Yet

If thou hast learned the rule of all exceptions,

Not this one, but another . . . Only stand !

BIVARAGH (amused)

But why not this one ? Honourably matched,

There's virtue in the bargain . . .

Scene
Seven

GRANAZ

(realising her danger if she
fell into Ali's hands as a
truant, she comes forward and
implores Bivaragh's aid on her
knees)

Save us, then ;

It may be we shall serve thee in the end, -

Bivaragh ! . . .

(Ali and his Guards are now seen in the street about to enter Hani's shop, by forcing a way through the crowd, which is largely prepared to resist him.)

HANI (terrified)

The Holy Messenger, and all !

(Bivaragh in answer to Granaz' appeal bars the way of the Guards with drawn sword)

ALI (seizing Hani's wrist)

What is the price of sesame to-day?

(Hani shrieks and Bivaragh aims a blow at Ali's arm, freeing her from the grip of the eunuch who, after a scuffle, calls his men off and retires)

BIVARAGH (sheathing sword)

There's not a man among them, let alone

a swordsman. Are they all like that, these Turks ?

GRANAZ

Are they all gone ?

HANI (Waving her back)

Go back !

BIVARAGH

Come forth, lady.

HANI

Hence, child, and quickly.

(Granaz is about to go, but looking at Bivaragh hesitates)

BIVARAGH

Stay ! There was a boy

Came with a message from thee. Who art thou

To say 'the lady Granaz loves a Dom' ?

HANI

And that Dom, too !

GRANAZ (to Hani)

Now let me have a name;

Who am I, and for whom shall I be known ?

HANI (testily)

Virtue rewarded ! - Fatima, the slut,

The go-between, and in good time who else ?

GRANAZ (to Bivaragh)

It may be I could serve thee in some way.

BIVARAGH

Thy tongue is milk and honey is thy speech;

But who art thou ?

GRANAZ

First, other than I seem;

Next, nameless. For the rest, there came a Dom

Who had a song he would not sing for gold;

And since this never was the way of Doms,

I would have heard that song, that royal song.

BIVARAGH

My song to Granaz - thou ?

GRANAZ

Why not to me ?

Am I so far removed from such deserts ?

HANI (to Granaz)

This is a Mir ; this man is honourable ;

His name's a byword for the truth. Begone !

GRANAZ (ignoring Hani)

I, or another - what's the odds to thee?

Granaz or Fatima, the tale's the same

For all who may be parodied unseen.

BIVARAGH

And can a mountain hide ? The fame of her

Is open as the heavens and my song

Even as a cloud doth signalise her brows,

There to be seen, and only there admired.

GRANAZ

And Granaz is this mountain unrevealed, ~~2~~ ~~2~~

Never yet seen but for this song of thine ?

HANI (aside)

One word, and she'll be known for what she is.

Allah ! I've suckled her to be my death !

GRANAZ

I who have seen her know how hid she is

By just such cloudy songs. But though she loves

To hear a Dom sing of the seldom-deeds

And doings and devotions of a poet

Few see -

HANI

Or ever want to.

GRANAZ

I have heard

She hates ^{that} the insincerity of song

Which plays the eunuch, and emasculates

Some singers. Be their manner what it will,

Their songs are confidently turned to make

One faultless rose do duty for us all ;
 All women each and one with the Beloved.
 'Wherefore,' saith Granaz - unseen Lady Granaz -
 'Their matter's in the sorriest contempt.'
 For mark you, I - 'tis she that speaks - 'I need
 Above carnelian lips and star-bright eyes
 And body silver as the moon, - I need
 But one thing to be faultless to a fault,
 One poor old thing that's past the time of prime
 To find me out and tickle the bazaars
 With saws that sample me, - and that's a Dem.

BIVARAGH

Then tell thy lady I have looked upon
 The ways of life, and lost the least of love ;
 So for the very fulness of it, strive
 To sing the excellence of things unseen.

GRANAZ

Allah assain thee !

BIVARAGH

God is everywhere !

HANI (aside)

Oh, she is mad !

GRANAZ

Well, if there be a way
 To find a heart as empty as thine own,
 Or lead a lack-love lady to a point
 For Doms to come at -

HANI

Who is this to thee ?

First think, then run !

GRANAZ

Why, Hani, there has been
 Employment here and now that I can vouch for,
 Which if reported with a true regard
 For what concerns the singer, may incline
 An ear to listen and a heart to feel, -
 It might be so. But this at least I know,
 Hani ; I know a man, and one for one,
 A man is always greater than his song.

BIVARACH

Lady, I thank thee.

HANI

No occasion here.

There are a thousand poets, and their songs
 Are ten of thousands; every one of them
 Had been a man if he had never sung . . .
 For what's a song ? and what's an elephant ?
 Put in the eye, a mustard-seed's as big,
 Till boon of tears ! it's out, and lost for ever.
 Thank her for nothing. Huh ! she's but a slave . . .

BIVARACH

I thank her none the less.

GRANAZ (as she goes out)

I'll think of thee !

(CURTAIN)

Scene.- Before moonrise in the gardens of the Shah's Palace in Kandahar. There are patches of dense shrubbery with overshadowing trees, and to one side in the distance is the glimmer as of a stately building.

Scene
One

(Enter Bivaragh leading his mare, which he tethered off stage ; he then returns to his companion, Lori.)

BIVARAGH

Is this the place? Give me the packed bazaars
Full of fat faces ! Are we to hush and creep
Along like snakes with ashes in their eyes ?

LORI

Ill luck and worse suspicion have it so.
Shall I be gone ?

BIVARAGH

I had a use for thee, -
A use clean gone with all we've left behind -
That savage face that cursed me like a cat
And bites no more - only its lolling tongue . . .
I have a notion that the worst's no worse
Than can be, or than may be ; being so,
This night hath come for nothing. Where's the haste ?
For never was more need for thee to learn
That, though I trust the stars I cannot see,
Here treachery is a lesser man than I.
I choose to have thee set before me, Dom.
This place is like a cavern, black as shame,
Stagnant as death for bald-head cowards who wear
Their hair upon their heels. The bargain's ours

So face it with a will and stand four-square;
 Am I no wiser than a weary wolf
 That lopes along the wind and looks behind ?

(he thrusts among the bushes
 with his sword)

Who's here ? What's here ?

(Lori attempts to leave)

Stand, or I'll cut thee down ! . . .

These trees are monstrous - monstrous as a troop

Of demons on the underside of dawn,

What is that palour leaping yonder - ah !

(he stumbles on a stone)

Blot of my life-blood ! shall I break an arm

All for the lack of knowing what's beyond ?

LORI

The goal is of thy seeking, son of Bahar.

BIVARAGH

And of thy finding, Dom ; remember that.

LORI

Let us be gone.

BIVARAGH

I'll hold thee to the purpose,

Lori, or, by my beard and turban, I swear

To mix and milk thy camels with mine own, -

Bind all thy fair ones to their coloured bedsteads

And burn them for a handsome harvesting ;

So think the letter of a little light.

The moon's a prophet in the plains ; mountains

Are strong olde worthy to contain him ; here -

(the moon rises)

Is that a fort ?

(Hani discovers herself mysteriously
from among the investing shrubberies)

HANI

The Palace Wonderful

Set in the Garden of Enchantment.

LORI (horrified)

Come ! . . .

BIVARAGH (thoroughly startled)

Abode of Shaitan !

HANI

Hope the best of it

As I do, Bivaragh; hope the best, I say.

BIVARAGH (disgusted)

I have no stomach for thee . . . Hence, or ever
This night redeems its promise with another
Carcass.

HANI

That will I never. Hence ? Not I !

Breach me the wall I've said, and - carcass, is it ?
When I find Ali look for such a carcass.

Too long I've roamed the world alone - too long
For the short gasp that comes and goes o' nights.
Too long I've limped these walls about, till now -
Now not a dog but knows me . . . See this cur !
Once he would tear me down; of all the pack
The mangiest, but the master^s . . . No yelping now.
And so the wall is breached at last. I saw thee ;
And through the breach I followed step for step ;
I saw, - and where two went, why not a third ?

And there I saw a...something. . . Saw that too,
 And turned the face up. . . Knew him as a child -
 Played in the mud with him as children play ;
 Later at other games . . . He and my Lal
 Fought, like two stallions for a filly - huh !
 But he was good; not like that other - rotten.
 Nothing so rotten as the rotten heart.
 I'll reach and slit with this, - for day or night
 I'll find him - ay, if ever I'll find him now.

(she goes out brandishing
 a knife)

BIVARAGH (superstitiously)

Every shadow shakes with all things to think off !

LORI (urging retreat)

Come, for all safety's past.

BIVARAGH

May be it is -

Ay, so it is - long past; but by the Prophet,
 When was the price of woman safety, Lori ?

LORI

Then quickly -

BIVARAGH

Hope the best, she said.

LORI (about to follow Hani)

But Hani -

BIVARAGH (holding him)

She may have work to do, and - hope the best.
 Let her alone; the night is black enough
 For company. Come to no greater harm

Then she's in search of - well, this night's her friend
 And ours. Nothing she owes but she'll repay
 Some time or other, and there'll be nothing over
 For anyone but Ali if she finds him.

And so she followed us, hoping the best - -

There is this Granaz ? Wavering, is she ? Perching
 Unfledged upon the brink of her concern ?
 Or peering from the unperturbable eaves
 Of constant chastity, that she won't tumble
 Out of the nest ?

LORI

She's not for thee to-night.

BIVARAGH

I've come too far to look for other turnings
 To-night ; and so the best is of appointment.
 What said she of appointment ?

LORI

Only this
 Damnable repetition -

BIVARAGH

Ay, repeat -
 It's damnable, but repeat . . . I need it all ;
 I'll listen - listen and compose myself,
 And hope the best. Now, word for word, repeat !

(But Bivaragh pays no real
 attention)

LORI

'Lead here this hind,' said she, 'and leave him. If
 He only love as wisely as his song,
 Leave him here in this secret shade.'

BIVARAGH

Give me the hills for secrecy : ~~Allah~~ ^{Allah!} this gloom
 Smells of a ^{pernicious} ~~crude~~ trade and of its tricks.

LORI

And indiscretions.

BIVARAGH

Not thy estimate
 Of indiscretions was a fragrant one.

LORI

All indiscretions are before they stink -
 Fragrant to all intent . . . I toiled for thee. . .
 Back to the hills, Bivaragh, son of Bahar !
 Back through the mountains to the plains of Sevi, -
 Back ! for I toil as late I sang for thee, -
 Thou such a swordsman, rider among Rinds !
 He should be made to answer the Assembly
 Who stakes his head . . . All dice are loaded here.
 Thy home is round the foothills where the tents
 Are bright with golden-fronted women ; these
 Should be remembered, who account to thee
 The ~~unavailable~~ honour of thy tribe.
 Who makes a pretty business of a song
 Should make no business of a song like this -
 A song for a king's daughter.

BIVARAGH

Hope the best.
 Doms are no poets. Only when the song
 Is made to serve a well-considered theme
 Of battle, ridicule, applause or love,

They sing the genius of their time and place
 And people for the poet who will pay ;
 And so I paid thee for thy noble pains.
 The song is made ; I made the song to sing -
 A song for a king's daughter. Hope the best.

LORI

I tell thee if the Princess turn her head
 Over her shoulder, kiss her -

BIVARAGH

So I shall

LORI

But if the Shah should turn his head and see ?

BIVARAGH

First prove the royalty of thy report,
 The Princess only, Lori ; leave the Shah.-
 So here thou sang'st the song, my royal song ?

LORI

Song of a hundred tales !

BIVARAGH

The best that's told
 Will bear another telling, so confess
 Thy trespasses.

LORI

Again ? Ungluttet ears ! . . .

'It was an idle moment of the day ' -

BIVARAGH

It was the idlest - noon, and idle enough.

LORI

I note the change, but not look for it.

BIVARAGH

The old hinge creaks with usage, and the moths
Are in this tale of hope (toying with dagger) So! So!

LORI (avoiding Bivaragh's dagger)

'Twas here

I strayed unwittingly -

BIVARAGH

Stray on !

LORI

And found

The Princess and her ladies all unveiled,
Like peris round me, or a flock of cranes
Crying for water.

BIVARAGH (fidgetting)

Good! I know the signs
Of undevoted seasons, the desire
Of dalliance, or any change for choice.
But hasten, for the climax should be soon.

LORI

For thus they came, a glittering delight,
Swaying towards me like a broken moon -

BIVARAGH

Ay, I would have it 'swaying' -

LORI

- like a moon

That slips and slides in water sideways, till
That one who was the sphere of them recalled
The order of her dignity, veiling
Herself, their source of beauty, and restored
The balance of her company with a word.

BIVARAGH (*staring about*)

A high embellishment not too remote
For truth and not too mean for nature. Well,
What word restored the mutilated moon ?

LORI (disgusted)

As many words as times I've told thee so, -
Song of a hundred tales !

(Bivaragh resents the tone
of Lori's reply, and pricks
him with his dagger)

- and only craved

A proper song to sing ; and after die
If need be, for her beauty matched thy praise.

BIVARAGH

Well ended for a Dam ! I have misjudged
A lofty instrument. Swear by thy beard
Thou liest, and I'll forgive thee all thy sins.
The tale was worthy, - that about the moon
Absolves thee - a most telling image ; but -
Hope is the promise of the ^{best} ~~worst~~ to come,
And that's not hereabout. Abandoned eaves !
Why haunt the shelter of a bird that's flown ?
Let us be gone . . .

LORI

I am thy friend !

BIVARAGH

And ~~time~~ ?

Scene
Two

A VOICE (as they are going)

Bivaragh !

LORI (aside)

How to be gone, and save my neck !

(he runs off)

Bivaragh !

BIVARAGH (at attention)

Who calls ?

THE VOICE

Look closer, son of Bahar.

BIVARAGH

Who speaks ?

THE VOICE

A slave.

BIVARAGH

Do slaves speak Persian ?

THE VOICE

Then —

A messenger.

BIVARAGH (in recognition)

Oh, tongue of milk and honey !

(he misses Lori)

Am I betrayed ? Confound such honesty !

Now for that touch to show the man I am . . .

A slave / a messenger ? Come forth, thou secret !

(he stands awhile on the defensive ; there is a movement of the bushes ; he plunges forward and drags out a woman - the Princess Granaz, disguised as an attendant of the shubistan)

GRANAZ

Barbarian, leave my veil !

BIVARAGH

Barbarian !

GRANAZ

Stand further . . . I am armed.

(She displays a dagger which
Bivaragh is quick to snatch
from her)

BIVARAGH (testing blade with tongue)

A poisonous thing ;

One scratch is death.

GRANAZ

Give me the knife . . .

(Bivaragh shakes his head)

Fool !

Many eyes watch us . . .

BIVARAGH (nervously)

Go is everywhere ;

But knives are treachery.

GRANAZ

Art thou not armed ?

The greater traitor.

BIVARAGH

But the greater need.

GRANAZ

What were thy weapons against sixty ?

BIVARAGH (looking about him)

Sixty !

If there's such wild accounting to be done,

Let them come on . . .

(he scans the Princess very closely)

Moon of a starless night !

Thou'rt lovely, if not royal . . . Where is she ?

I seek not thee, nor them ; she whom I seek -
Hast thou no message from the one I seek ?

GRANAZ

The traitor in thee seeks a victim, then ?
Whom seekest thou, Bivaragh ?

BIVARAGH

Swear that thou art honest.

I see no treachery, only heavenliness ;
But thou wert armed (showing dagger) For whom was this ?

GRANAZ

Myself.

BIVARAGH

For thy defence against what manner of man ?
Barbarian ? No harm shall come from me,
That is the truth ; and if I ~~seek~~^{take} a name,
One trust deserves another, even a traitor's.
Therefore I speak. I seek the lady Granaz.

GRANAZ (mocking)

Granaz ! Who steals the 'Rose of Persia' ? Thou ?
Gulf of adventure ! hast thou lost thy wits ?

BIVARAGH

Was this thy message ? Call me fool again ;
The matter's small enough. As for my wits,
My wits are livelier for the sight of thee
Drawn from this sea of blackness. Who would think
It harboured such a pearl ?

GRANAZ

Be gentler, then ;

Give me the knife, and leave me to the will
Of her that sent me on this moonlit madness.

The world's too full of thick-beards, day or night.

BIVARAGH

And slaves with daggers.

GRANAZ

Shall I call the Guard

And have thee spitted for thy lady ?

BIVARAGH

Call!

Then veid thine eyes, the only stars to-night . . .

I have forgotten her; her image fades

Like mist among the vines that hour the sun

Hursts furious through the hills. I find three things,

Three things I never thought to find to-night:

An honest Dom, the passing of a song,

A heart that burns like wax. The Dom is gone ;

Let the song pass; but I - am I a slave

To labour in a vale of pomegranates

And never slake his spittle with a fruit ?

GRANAZ

Bivaragh, thine is a hot and dangerous love . . .

The lady Granaz bids me -

BIVARAGH

Name her not !

She was a little flame - a false conceit

Of memory ^{lured} ~~tinkled~~ by report, and less, -

A new, far-off and undesired desire

Come by the smoky vapouring in bazaars

Of noisy jays, - a perfume, or a dream

That meant no more to me than pride of song.
 The truth of thee denies her very self.
 Who calls thee 'love' and links it with thy name ?
 Allah be praised, I know thee ; but $\frac{1}{2}$ thy name !

GRANAZ

My name is far below thee in the scale
 Of doing ; and the message that I bear -

BIVARAGH

Leave it for tenderer things I love thee, love
 thee !

GRANAZ

Thou lovest me, whose duty is to serve
 Only her sherbet ?

(and she laughs at him)

BIVARAGH

Shall I die of thirst ?

GRANAZ

Better to die of that -

BIVARAGH

Than die of love,

Thirsty for love ? Would that I knew thy name !

GRANAZ

Which if I told thee then I should have lied,
 And thou wouldst make a beggarly dastānagh
 For dirty Doms to thrum in crooked lanes,
 And girls to laugh at

(she sings in mockery of the
 dastānagh)

'I am the slave of my fair friend }
 I am the slave of her wavy bedice ;
 I am the slave of her bright lips ;
 I am the slave of the flowers of her breast ' .

I hate the sentiment
 Of common things, - and - how I hate a slave !

BIVARAGH

But art thou not a slave ?

GRANAZ

The poorest sort
 Of slave - the slave of love. I hate myself.
 Art thou a poet ?

BIVARAGH

Devourer of my heart !

GRANAZ

Then take my meaning, - for my lady waits.

BIVARAGH (desperately)

Back to the hills and all my wits abroad !

GRANAZ

Stay !

(he is going, but turns at once)

If I dared to love thee ?

BIVARAGH

Oh, beloved !

Remove thy veil . . . Thy lineage, and thy name !

GRANAZ

Give me the knife . . .

(Bivaragh throws her dagger
 behind him and gives her his
 own. Hani reaches out stealthily
 and possesses herself of Granaz'
 dagger, compares it with her own,
 and prefers it, and retires)

Is this how Bivaragh loves ?

But name and lineage ! What were these to thee ?

That is the name of anyone's beloved

But something for an absent one to hush

And hide, and worship at an inner shrine ;

Something to call upon in solitude ;

A thing so near to transport and to tears,

The worst is spoken when the best is said.

BIVARAGH

Thus would I call on her.

GRANAZ

Then call on her.

Not me . . .

(And Bivaragh ^{again} threatens
~~attain~~ to be going in despair)

And yet methinks thou hast not seen

My lady Granaz, whom they call 'The Rose' . . .

Couldst thou have seen her when thy song was sung. -

First white as a pomegranate-flower, and after,

Red running in the white, more like a tulip;

Her dark eyes, like deep wells, fulfilled, ~~and~~ brimmed

With brilliant waters ; and her mouth was seen

To be an abode of sweetness.

BIVARAGH

Nothing in live

Could steal one grain of sugar from thine own.

GRANAZ

Thou hast not seen my lady ; musky locks

Hang far below her waist, and there is dust

Of diamonds in her hair, like stars at night

Before the moon is up. Yet there's the moon
Shines in that starry firmament as well ;
And, couldst thou know the lovely truth of her,
More almonds in her breast than all the trees
of Persia.

BIVARAGH

Tell me more of her ; say on !

GRANAZ

Thou hast not seen her ?

BIVARAGH

Hardly yet ; say on !

GRANAZ

More is extravagance.

BIVARAGH

It might be so ;

And hath she all the almonds of the world ?

GRANAZ

Then for another painting I would say
Her beauty is immortal as the cypress,
Which changes with the season only to add
A fresher spangle, growing more and more
Ripe and desirable from the root up ;
Up from the instep to the eyebrow, arch
To arch, and to be marvelled on , I say.

BIVARAGH (his looks rivetted on Granaz)

Now I begin to see her, for she seems
Deep-rooted in the earth which is my heart,
Parched for the dew upon its leaves - her lips.
Sweet mistress, for the heaven of love's content,
Say on ! Say on !

GRANAZ

I have said all I will, -
More than I mean for any but her lover.
The lesson's lost on thee. I'll call the guard.
Thy love is false, but not more false than mine ;
So I'll be gone.

BIVARAGH (frustrating her)

Not this way, nay - nor that.

GRANAZ (at bay)

Fool ! What am I to thee ?

BIVARAGH

Now call the Guard -
That I may learn thy name.

GRANAZ

Plague of my name !
If but thy heart were tutored as thy tongue,
There would be less to hear and more to know . . .
Who names a woman in the dark ? . . . Stand back !
There are no ears, but there are many eyes,
Invisible eyes -

(Bivaragh turns away in
despair as though to go)

- high as the hidden stars

Then sunlight's in the air. . . There are no eyes !
Stay, Bivaragh, for - I love thee.

BIVARAGH

Treachery,

Why should I stay ?

GRANAZ

Have I not seen thee go
 Lordly by day, the lordliest of Rinds ?
 I love thee ; do not go. There are no eyes,
 Not one that sees us.

BIVARAGH

Why say it to my shame ?
 For what thou art, thou art ; and what I take
 I'll take abasing no man. See to it
 Thou offerest naught but what is thine to give.
 Now speak, and I'll believe my ears once more.

GRANAZ

I love thee, Bivaragh

BIVARAGH

Lady, if thou liest
 I may have losses.

GRANAZ

What hast thou to lose ?

BIVARAGH

My life, belike.

GRANAZ

Thy life ?

BIVARAGH

I was not once
 So heedful ; but to hear and to believe,
 To hang a woman's honour high in the heart
 And call it mine, this makes death terrible -
 Terrible !

GRANAZ

Yet there, is worse - dishonour.
 My life, - it may be thine, a Khan's, a slave's ;
 A tree may crush me, or a thunderbolt
 Whirl out of heaven and end me ; or a snake
 Destroy me, or a tiger dash me dead ;
 The very ground may growl and swallow me ; -
 These, any one of these may have my life ;
 But in the sense of doings and deserts,
 My honour, Bivaragh, is not any man's,
 Not even thine.

BIVARAGH

Not even mine ? . . . To-night !

GRANAZ

Ah, there's my terror - to deny thee, love ;
 Believe it; for though death is always near,
 Dishonour's nearer. For thy safety's sake
 My honour were the feeblest pledge of all.
 Yet would I pledge thee honour - even this,
 If only honour should suffice.

BIVARAGH

To-night !

GRANAZ

May, Bivaragh, not to-night ; but, moon for moon,
 To-morrow night.

BIVARAGH

Give me a token, then,
 To know thee for the comfort of my soul . . .
 Thy brows are archways for the thoughts that charge

Abroad unchallenged, but all-challenging ;
 And if I fall, I fall at least disarmed -
 Unarmed to all intent, - reckless as one
 Who ~~st~~right forgets all danger in the deed.
 There is a cloud between us ; drop thy veil,
 And show me every jewel of thy face
 That I may look upon thee wondering,
 Still wondering at the fool within my heart,
 Helpless in soul. The sign of death is fever;
 The sign of rain is dust and a hot haze ;
 The sign of love is smiling . . .

(Granaz loosens her veil,
 revealing herself smiling)

Moon of God !

I'll take thee so - to-night !

GRANAZ

Ah ! not to-night. . .

Mark ! there's a sound . . . My lady waits for me;
 And since thou wouldst not hear of her, I'll say -
 What shall I say ?

BIVANAGH

Tell her, tell her I braved
 A hundred perils coming ; that I found
 The wall so rotten that I pitched it down ;
 That ^{there} I killed a guard, and may kill more
 Before the moon is higher by a span ;

Tell her I looked for her, and fought for her,
And found her not, but - thank her for the rose !

GRANAZ

Is a guard dead ? Then there is worse to do.
This cast of shadow tells its tale, - it tells
The watch is on its rounds, and past its time . . .
Love made the garden sweet ; now there's a stale
Unhealthiness abroad . . . My love ! My love,
I taste the air, and it is deathly. . . Hush !
What's stirring there to make that shade alive
With steely sparks ? Are we surrounded ? I -
I am afraid, but most for thee . . .

(there is a pause during which
Granaz determines on a line
action in the face of danger
of which she is now convinced
beyond suspicion)

Bivaragh,

Kiss me !

BIVARAGH (on the alert)

Nay, there is danger.

GRANAZ

Kiss me !

BIVARAGH

Love first; love after.

GRANAZ (with arms about him)

Kiss me, then, for life, -

Kiss me !

BIVARAGH

Not for a refuge . . . Ah, thy hands !
 There ! I am mad for thee ; but let me be.
 Let me die fighting.

GRANAZ

Never; love comes first.

BIVARAGH

Love before life ?

GRANAZ

Before all things ; love is life.

(BIVARAGH looks about,
 hesitates, and finally
 throws away his sword, and
 embraces Granaz)

BIVARAGH

Love be it ! God is everywhere ! Love first !

Scene
 Three

(Three guards rush
 forward and Bivaragh
 is secured)

GRANAZ (retrieving Bivaragh's sword)

. . . Dishonour on dishonour ! . . .

(to Bivaragh) Said I not truly there were eyes to see ?

BIVARAGH (infatuated)

As truly as no eyes, or none but mine ;

For no eyes saw what mine ^{saw} ~~saw~~ ; no lips fed

Upon such fruit - mine - as I've lived to-night,

Or as I'll die content. . .

(A guard makes as
 though to stab Bivaragh)

GRANAZ (intervening)

Not in my sight !

Not now ! His death is mine to order here.

GUARD (recognising the Princess)

The lady Granaz !

BIVARAGH

Granaz ! Art thou she ?

GRANAZ

He shall be torn upon the stake, then scourged ;
There shall be torture first. As for the Guard,
How comes this thick-beard in the Palace grounds?
Not three days since, a wandering Dom ; to-night,
This Hind.. Where is the wall down ? See to this ;
I am amazed, disgraced ! For day or night
These gardens are my pleasure, and I choose , -
Or anyone's. I'll speak of this to-morrow.
Bind him, then stand aside. I'll judge the knots.

(After binding Bivaragh
securely, the guards
retire to a distance)

BIVARAGH (to Granaz)

This is a fearful faith to keep with me, -
A fearful and adulterous seed to plant -
A fearful plant to burgeon in the night -
To-night ; and fearful fruit to pluck to-morrow.
Witness, I chose love first. Come, judge the knots ;
They must not loosen, or not death itself
Should part us, love, to-night, had I but hands,
My hands about thy neck to strangle thee . . .
But now rejoice ! Witness I chose love first -
Love first in all things, - God is everywhere ! -
And loved an instant or a thousand years,
I know not ; that I lived and died the fool

God and a woman made me. Be it so . . .

Now that I hate thee, love - I find - I find /

(He is straining against
his bonds, but gives it up)

Is life so precious ? death so terrible ?

I called death terrible, - I laugh at it !

The more because I leave thee worse than death -

Dishonour. All - all that in life I dreamed,

All that in love I lived for and believed,

Now, what in hate I may, for death I'll do

To-morrow and hereafter, moon for moon.

Daily I'll stand far-seen barring thy way

To sunlight ; and by night, Granaz - by night

I will be with thee, to lie down with thee

With all my wounds upon me, it shall seem,

And stroke thy feet in darkness and desire

Where no sleep is. So it shall seem to thee.

For there's more murder in man's long remembrance,

More madness in the memory of a deed

Of such unfaith, more poverty of heart,

More searching and more never-finding, love,

Than death shall compass or have warrant for.

Yet Death - hath he not marvelous pity, Death ! -

Death comes at last : release ! But till death come

Thy cowering heart shall yearn for sepulture,

Finding no refuge but in memory , -

Memory, the home of things that try to die,

But cannot die . . . Granaz ! Remember me !

GRANAZ (aside)

Praise be to Allah for this savage love
That knows no hate in death, no hate in life,
No hate in all the world but in remembrance !

(She goes to Bivaragh with caution
and anxiety, pretending care of the
knots)

Hush then ! - Perish thy words for mine, Bivaragh.
Here was no honest fighting to be done ;
Believe there was no other hope for thee;
They would not dare to slay thee in my arms . . .
Still ! - while I cut the bonds -

(Granaz does with with Bivaragh's
own sword, which she then thrusts into
his hand)

BIVARAGH (rushing on the guards)

Glory to God !

(From his onslaught two guards
stagger off stage, one falling
partly in view; a third lies wounded
to death)

Granaz, what shall I do ? . . . I cannot think
Two thoughts that do not leap apart. My blade,
Red with this indecisive blood, - my heart.
White with a wild undoing -

GRANAZ

Then - to horse ! -

To horse, and so be gone . . .

BIVARAGH (dazed)

To horse ?

GRANAZ

Go! Go!

(Bivaragh rushes off wildly leaving Granaz meanwhile a prey to stoical despair. When he returns he is actually about to mount, but seems to come to some understanding with himself, and turns to where Granaz watches his actions)

BIVARAGH

Lady—

GRANAZ

Men call me Granaz . . .

BIVARAGH

Since thou hast given me life, - life at the price
Of all dishonour, and that dishonour thine ;
Life before love that should be before all -

GRANAZ

And is for ever ! Call me 'love' to-night
For both of us, but - go !

BIVARAGH

How shall I go ?
Will they not flog thee for a light-o'-love ?

GRANAZ (passionately)

Light of my love, Bivaragh, call me that name
To-morrow in the mountains, and they shall answer
Love - love - love from half a hundred peaks,
But brokenly, as now broken I am
And left to lie, - down from the joyous peaks
Of love fallen precipitous to despair . . .
Ay, on a day's harmonious loneliness
Call me that foolish^{man} memorially
In a far place, high in the windy world,
And think how like a tent, with all poles down
How very poor and desolate I am.

And make a song, another song, my Bivaragh,
 A song of me, not of a king's daughter
 Who gave herself to venture and caprice
 And waywardness and wanton make-believe, -
 Who cut all loops of hindrance only to set
 Saddle upon a whimsy and flee away
 Upon a dusty scurry of all incaution ;
 But only of me. Sing me for what I am,
 Dry as a shard, and from the ~~sed~~^{sed} heart outward
 Withered as all great wildernesses are . . .
 Now, in a frightful desert of assurance
 Beside the bitter waters of my tears,
 I must lie down alone, alone to grieve,
 Alone lastly to die, dishonourably
 Abused for all my pride of thee - of all
 That wonder - manly and tumultuous
 Wonder of her, every woman needs
 Must dally with, as though it were a veil
 For trifling, waved triumphantly,
 A lovely shining thing with lightning in it,
 Flung up to be the partner of the air
 Before she wears it like a vesture fallen
 From paradise, - her share of love, her right
 To heaven . . . Bivaragh, light of my love,
 Consider me - remember me tomorrow -
 Oh, get thee gone ! Forget me - curse me, even,
 Who talk the hours away to have thee done
 To death at leisure . . . Go !

BIVARAGH

How shall I go ?

GRANAZ

To horse, and so be gone !

BIVARAGH

I gone - thou flogged ?

GRANAZ

At least not living, and most thanks to thee
Of whom I had this knife again.

(She tries to stab herself
but Bivaragh stays her hand)

BIVARAGH

My knife ! . . .

Thou gav'st me life, and shall I give thee death ?

GRANAZ (offering dagger, which Bivaragh
does not take)

Ah, wouldst thou give me death ? Then plunge it here ;

I cannot. Love seems greater than dishonour ;

Love before all, but surely I can die

If thou wilt slay . . . It is the slaying - oh !

Have done with me, - oh, surely I can die !

(Granaz suddenly perceives the
wounded guard threatening Bivaragh
in the rear, and advances to dis-
patch the fellow ; but her courage
again fails her)

GRANAZ (hysterically)

I cannot ! . . .

(The guard falls dead as she
regards him.)

Is he dead ? . . . Ah! how I hate -

No more; for how I pity . . . Oh, pity me, -

For love's sake, pity me and love me, Bivaragh.
 Now is love's turn to pity . . . Pity 'tis
 To love at all when love turns pitiful.
 Yet love is God, and God is everywhere,
 Thou sayest, and very pitiful is He. . .
 All friends in pity are the friends of love . . .
 All things with pity in them turn to love, -
 even Death. Hath he not marvelous pity, - Death ?

(Granaz offers Bivaragh the
 dagger which he takes mechanically)

Yet love hath pity greater even than death ;
 Now is love's turn to pity . . . Now !

BIVARAGH (gazing vacantly about)

Granaz,

How shall I leave thee lying among these ?

(Ali and the escaped guard now
 burst in upon them ; the guard
 hangs back as Hani springs from
 her ambush upon Ali, and stabs
 him unmercifully)

HANI (stabbing)

Allah pity the pitiless ! - not I.

Allah requireth, Allah requiteth, Ali !

(Ali falls dead)

GRANAZ (advancing, then recoiling)

Hani ! . . .

(The guard, recovering, now cuts
 down Hani, who falls with her
 teeth in his sword arm, besides
 stabbing him in return for the
 thrust she has received; they col-
 lapse fighting - the guard dead,
 Hani dying)

(frenzied). . . Out of this horror ! Out of this death !

Leave me? Thou would'st not leave me, Bivaragh ?

BIVARAGH (recovering himself)

Granaz ! -

I did not dare to hope.

GRANAZ (horrified and unnerved)

Hear me away !

(remembering Hani, she goes
to her)

Oh, Hani, the merciless pity of this night !

HANI (as she expires)

The mercy of this night is mine . . . The pity -

The pity - leave to God.

(A growing tumult of approaching
guards attracts her dying attention,
she waves to Bivaragh to save
Granaz, so little concerned with
her own safety)

Bivaragh !

(Bivaragh, startled at last into
activity and resource, seizes
Granaz bodily, mounts to mare with
her and escapes before they can be
taken. The stage fills with a
quarrelsome and disconcerted company
grouped about Hani, as she dies,
happy in the knowledge of having
done all she could hope for)

All's done !

(Curtain)

